



# The Pennsylvania System of School Assessment

## Writing Item and Scoring Sampler

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2008–2009  
Grade 11

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# WRITING

## ***INTRODUCTION***

### **General Introduction**

The Department of Education provides districts and schools with tools to assist in delivering focused instructional programs aligned to the state assessment system. These tools include academic standards documents, assessment handbooks, specifics of the assessment, and content-based item and scoring samplers. This 2008–2009 Writing Item and Scoring Sampler is a useful tool for Pennsylvania educators in the preparation of local instructional programs and for the statewide PSSA.

### **What Is Included**

The 2008–2009 Writing Item and Scoring Samplers do not contain newly released items. The samplers are a compilation of previously released items. This item and scoring sampler contains multiple-choice items (based on embedded-error passages) and writing prompts that were used in the 2005, 2006, and 2007 PSSA Writing Assessments. These items and prompts are representative of the types of items and prompts that will appear on the operational 2009 PSSA Writing Assessment. Each item has been through a rigorous review process and is aligned to the state standards.

### **Purpose and Uses**

The items and writing prompts in this sampler may be used as examples for creating assessment items at the classroom level, and they may also be copied and used as part of a local instructional program.\* Classroom teachers may find it beneficial to have students respond to the prompts in the sampler. Educators can then use the sampler as a guide to score the responses either independently or with colleagues within a school or a district.

### **Item Format and Scoring Guidelines**

Each multiple-choice item has four answer choices and is connected to an embedded-error passage. Each correct response to a multiple-choice item is worth one point.

The writing prompts are designed to take about sixty minutes to complete. However, during an actual testing event, students are given additional time as necessary to complete their responses. The writing prompts are scored with both a 1–4 point scale mode-specific scoring guideline and with a 1–4 point scale conventions scoring guideline. The mode-specific scoring guidelines presented within this sampler were used to score each respective prompt. Actual (transcribed) student responses are used as samples to represent each score point.

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# WRITING

## **EMBEDDED-ERROR PASSAGES AND MULTIPLE-CHOICE ITEMS: GENERAL INFORMATION**

The purpose of the passages and multiple-choice items is to assess students' abilities to revise and edit written text. Each correct response is worth one point.

These multiple-choice items reflect Pennsylvania Academic Standards—Quality of Writing—1.5.11.E and 1.5.11.F.

### **1.5.11.E**

*Revise writing to improve style, word choice, sentence variety and subtlety of meaning after rethinking how questions of purpose, audience and genre have been addressed.*

### **1.5.11.F**

*Edit writing using the conventions of language.*

- *Spell all words correctly.*
- *Use capital letters correctly.*
- *Punctuate correctly (periods, exclamation points, question marks, commas, quotation marks, apostrophes, colons, semicolons, parentheses, hyphens, brackets, ellipses).*
- *Use nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, conjunctions, prepositions and interjections properly.*
- *Use complete sentences (simple, compound, complex, declarative, interrogative, exclamatory and imperative).*

## **SAMPLE PASSAGES AND ITEMS**

There are six embedded-error passages in this sampler. Each is followed by a set of four multiple-choice items. Each item is preceded by a standards notation and followed by an annotation that provides additional explanation or clarification.

A correct answer is indicated by an asterisk (\*).



## WRITING

### Writing Passage 1 with Multiple-Choice Items

Read the passage below and then answer questions 1–4.

**1** Today, camels live in Africa and Asia, and llamas live in the mountain areas of South America. **2** Ancestors of both camels and llamas thrived in North America but began to disappear they were victims of animal predators and early human hunters. **3** The camel's ancestors crossed the Bering Strait's temporary land bridge to Asia. **4** They spread across Asia into North Africa, gradually developing into the familiar camel of today. **5** Living in the desert helped the camel to develop an ability to go long periods without water and increased its value as a pack animal. **6** Meanwhile, the ancestors of today's llama traveled south through the Isthmus of Panama into South America. **7** Like camels, llamas developed to fit their environment. **8** Their feet are small because they walk on rocky surfaces, and their coats are thick and woolly to protect them from the cold, dry atmosphere. **9** Some people around the world keep llamas as pets.

#### 1.5.11.F

1. Which sentence should be written as two sentences?

- \* A sentence 2
- B sentence 4
- C sentence 5
- D sentence 8

*Students are asked to recognize a run-on sentence. The answer options include four rather lengthy sentences from the passage. Students must read each sentence for completeness. Option A is the correct answer. It represents a common error in sentence structure with a second independent clause that begins with a pronoun (they) and continues the idea presented in the first independent clause.*

#### 1.5.11.E

2. Which word would best begin sentence 3?

- A However
- \* B Eventually
- C Furthermore
- D Similarly

*This item addresses the logic and appropriateness of a transitional expression. The first few sentences of this passage are concerned with chronology – “Today” in the first sentence places students in the present, but sentence 2 begins the history (“ancestors,” “early human”), and sentence 3 maintains it (repeating the word “ancestors” and moving the animals from North America to Asia). Sentence 4 continues the chronology and brings students back to “today.” Of the four answer options, only Option B offers a transition that fits smoothly into this time continuum.*

## WRITING

### 1.5.11.F

3. Which rewrite of sentence 4 uses the ellipsis correctly?

- A . . . They spread across Asia into North Africa, gradually developing into the familiar camel of today.
- \* B They spread across Asia . . . gradually developing into the familiar camel of today.
- C They spread across Asia into North Africa . . . gradually developing into the familiar camel of today.
- D They spread across Asia into North Africa, gradually developing into the familiar camel of today . . .

*The purpose of an ellipsis is to indicate quoted material that has been omitted. This item is passage-dependent in the sense that students must recognize what is missing from this particular sentence. The item is really measuring a student's knowledge of the rule regarding use of the ellipsis. Option B is the only version of the sentence that removes material that was present in the original.*

### 1.5.11.E

4. Which sentence should be removed because it adds a detail not relevant to the passage?

- A sentence 1
- B sentence 5
- C sentence 7
- \* D sentence 9

*Students must recognize an irrelevant detail. In this case, the last sentence of the passage adds a detail that is somewhat related to what preceded it. However, when evaluated against the passage as a whole, it should stand out as a shift from the informative (comparison/contrast) mode to an "Oh, by the way" add-on that does not maintain relevance or satisfactorily conclude the passage. Option D is the correct answer.*

## WRITING

### Writing Passage 2 with Multiple-Choice Items

Read the passage below and then answer questions 5–8.

<sup>1</sup> In science class this month, my classmates and I worked together on a variety of experiments that explore gravity's properties. <sup>2</sup> Yesterday, we discussed what it must be like to work and live in the weightless environment of space. <sup>3</sup> Mr. Lampley, our teacher, described how astronauts in orbiting spacecraft, due to constant free-fall, can move around in ways that are impossible on Earth. <sup>4</sup> One experiment we did in class showed how water drops are pear-shaped when they hang from some surfaces \_\_\_\_\_ gravity pulls the drops into that shape. <sup>5</sup> On spacecraft, escaped liquid forms perfect spheres because the water molecules attract each other equally. <sup>6</sup> In a weightless environment, these spheres just drift around instead of falling to the ground. <sup>7</sup> These floating spheres can be tough to capture so astronauts have to be exceptionally careful when drinking any kind of liquid. <sup>8</sup> On the other hand, washing up is very easy in space because water sticks to the body. <sup>9</sup> While being weightless might be enjoyable for a while, I think a weightless environment might end up causing some rather exasperating complications. <sup>10</sup> For now, I will remain in science class and just imagine being able to float around the room.

#### 1.5.11.F

5. What is the reason for the apostrophe in the word gravity's in sentence 1?

- A It forms a contraction for gravity is.
- B It is the plural form of gravity.
- C It is the singular possessive form of gravity. \*
- D It is the plural possessive form of gravity.

*Students must decide if the word is being used as a contraction in this context (Option A), if it is in correct plural form (Options B and D), or if it is singular and in correct possessive form (Option C). The word's use in the passage will lead students to choose C as the correct answer (gravity's properties = the properties of gravity = singular possessive).*

#### 1.5.11.E

6. Which word best completes sentence 4?

- A because \*
- B although
- C however
- D consequently

*Students are asked to use logic in selecting an appropriate transitional word to complete a sentence. Students must recognize the two independent clauses within the sentence as well as the relationship between the two clauses to arrive at the correct answer. Answer options include two subordinating*

## WRITING

*conjunctions and two adverbs, any of which can show relationships between clauses. In this case, the second clause explains the first clause; therefore, because is the best answer.*

### 1.5.11.F

7. Which revision of sentence 7 is punctuated correctly?

- A These floating spheres, can be tough to capture so astronauts have to be exceptionally careful when drinking any kind of liquid.
- B These floating spheres can be tough to capture, so astronauts have to be exceptionally careful when drinking any kind of liquid. \*
- C These floating spheres can be tough to capture so, astronauts have to be exceptionally careful when drinking any kind of liquid.
- D These floating spheres can be tough to capture so astronauts have to be exceptionally careful, when drinking any kind of liquid.

*Students are asked to correctly place a comma in a compound sentence. Students must recognize the two independent clauses within the sentence and demonstrate knowledge of the appropriate punctuation. Option B places the comma after the first independent clause and before the conjunction so and is the correct answer.*

### 1.5.11.E

8. In a final revision, which information would logically follow sentence 9?

- A examples of situations involving gravity
- B further explanation of the writer's opinion
- C further explanation of the term "weightless"
- D examples of possible "exasperating complications" \*

*This item asks students to choose the most relevant type of details to add to the passage. After reading sentence 9, students will decide which of the four detail choices is the most logical to follow the sentence. The words "exasperating complications" serve as a cue for students to choose Option D, "examples of possible 'exasperating complications,'" as the correct answer.*

## WRITING

### Writing Passage 3 with Multiple-Choice Items

Read the passage below and then answer questions 9–12.

<sup>1</sup> Many Americans are intrigued with the era of the Pony Express. <sup>2</sup> What many do not realize, however, is that the Pony Express lasted for less than two years. <sup>3</sup> Wild animals, mountainous terrain, thieves, hostile enemies, blizzards, and temperature extremes made the journey extremely perilous. <sup>4</sup> So dangerous that some recruiting advertisements included these shocking requirements: “Willing to risk death daily. Orphans preferred.” <sup>5</sup> The route from St. Joseph, Missouri, to Sacramento, California, was nearly 2,000 miles long. <sup>6</sup> Today, traveling at sixty miles per hour on paved highways, a driver would need four eight-hour days to make the journey. <sup>7</sup> Under much more difficult conditions and on horseback, these heroic riders delivered the mail in a mere ten days. <sup>8</sup> Although short-lived, the Pony Express was vitally important for many reasons, including keeping communication open between California and the union during the Civil War. <sup>9</sup> The completion of a transcontinental telegraph line brought the romantic period of the Pony Express to a close.

1.5.11.F

9. Which sentence is incomplete?

- A sentence 2
- B sentence 3
- \* C sentence 4
- D sentence 5

*This item measures a common sentence fragment error. The content of sentence 4 so closely follows the content of sentence 3 that students will naturally read the two sentences together to understand meaning. In order, however, to evaluate sentence structure, they will have to read each of the answer options for completeness. Option A has unusual sentence structure, but it is complete. Option B is a long sentence that contains a list acting as a subject, but it is complete, and Option D has prepositional phrases between the subject and verb, but it is complete as well. Only Option C lacks all the elements of a complete sentence.*

## WRITING

### 1.5.11.E

10. Where would this sentence best fit in the passage?

The quickest recorded run was seven days, seventeen minutes.

- A after sentence 3
- B after sentence 5
- C after sentence 6
- \* D after sentence 7

*Students are asked to place a detail within the passage. This requires knowledge of organizational and logical strategies. The sentence to be added to the passage gives a specific detail about the time recorded for a specific run. It would not fit after sentence 3 because sentence 3 is talking about the perils of the journey. Placing it after sentence 5 is incorrect because sentence 5 is talking about the length of the route. Sentence 6 is a comparison between the trip then and the trip now. Sentence 7 introduces the specific length of time these trips took, which leads directly to the new detail concerning the record for the quickest run. Option D is the correct answer.*

### 1.5.11.F

11. Which sentence contains a capitalization error?

- A sentence 4
- B sentence 5
- \* C sentence 8
- D sentence 9

*Capitalization errors at grade 11 are not often in the conventional areas of capitalization (states, product names, etc.). This item is designed to measure student knowledge of the more subtle rules of capitalization. Entire sentences are offered as options rather than specific words with the idea of challenging students to consider all words that may be capitalized incorrectly, as well as all words that are not capitalized and perhaps should be. Sentence 8 does not capitalize “union” when referring to the very specific Union of states of the Civil War. Option C is the correct answer.*

### 1.5.11.F

12. Which word or words is the subject of sentence 9?

- \* A completion
- B transcontinental
- C line
- D Pony Express

*This is one of very few items at grade 11 that addresses a simple subject identification. Students are directed to one sentence only and are asked to identify the noun or noun phrase that serves as the subject of the sentence. The correct answer is Option A.*

## WRITING

### Writing Passage 4 with Multiple-Choice Items

Read the passage below and then answer questions 13–16.

<sup>1</sup> Buttons are such basic fasteners that one no longer thinks of them as unusual or valuable, but for most of human history, it was more common to wrap, tie, or lace clothing to the body. <sup>2</sup> Crafted from bone, shell, wood, or even precious metals, buttons first appeared on clothing around 2000 BC and were only decorations. <sup>3</sup> Buttons saw their first practical use in the thirteenth century when it became fashionable to wear tighter fitting garments of delicate fabrics. <sup>4</sup> Buttons offer a closer fit without damaging the fabric. <sup>5</sup> Paintings from the fourteenth through the seventeenth centuries show that buttons became wildly popular. <sup>6</sup> Rows of closely spaced buttons were used on garments of all kinds. <sup>7</sup> A sixteenth-century French king, Francis I, once wore a black velvet suit with 13,400 gold buttons! <sup>8</sup> Of course, buttons used in such abundance were more decorative than practical. <sup>9</sup> Even today one sees remnants of this tradition. <sup>10</sup> Formal dresses and wedding gowns often have zippers but they have a row of beautiful and closely spaced buttons to hide the zipper.

#### 1.5.11.E

13. Which version best rewrites sentence 2 without losing or changing meaning?

- A Decorative buttons were crafted from bone, shell, wood, or even precious metals, in 2000 BC.
- B Buttons first appeared in clothing around 2000 BC and were crafted from bone, shell, wood, or even precious metals.
- C Originally mere decorations, buttons crafted from bone, shell, wood, or even precious metals first appeared on clothing around 2000 BC. \*
- D Clothing from 2000 BC contains buttons made of bone, shell, wood, and even precious metals.

*Students are asked to evaluate which revision contains all the information of the original. Options A, B, and D all omit information contained in the original. Option C is the only option that revises the add-on “and were only decorations” from the original sentence into a modifying phrase and places it at the beginning of the sentence. It is the best revision.*

#### 1.5.11.F

14. In sentence 4, which form of the verb offer is correct?

- A offered \*
- B offering
- C will offer
- D would offer

*The passage shifts between past and present tense, so students must decide which tense is correct for sentence 4 given its context and its relationship to the sentences that surround it. Option A, the simple past tense, is the correct answer as a specific time in the past is being discussed.*

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### 1.5.11.F

15. Which word is misspelled?

- A precious in sentence 2
- B delacate in sentence 3 \*
- C velvet in sentence 7
- D abundance in sentence 8

*Students are given grade-appropriate words as possible answer options in spelling items. The correct answer is Option B.*

### 1.5.11.F

16. In sentence 10, a comma needs to be added after the word

- A dresses.
- B zippers. \*
- C beautiful.
- D buttons.

*Students should recognize the two independent clauses within sentence 10 and that a comma is needed before the coordinating conjunction but to form a compound sentence. The remaining answer options offer incorrect comma placements.*



## WRITING

### Writing Passage 5 with Multiple-Choice Items

Read the passage below and then answer questions 17–20.

<sup>1</sup> The most unlikely war heroes may just be tiny carrier pigeons. <sup>2</sup> Their achievements were so impressive that many of them were buried with full military honors. <sup>3</sup> These valiant birds performed many tasks, including delivering messages and documents, serving as spies, and taking pictures with miniature cameras. <sup>4</sup> Carrying an order to cancel a bombing mission, a pigeon called G.I. Joe flew twenty miles in twenty minutes and saved the lives of a thousand soldiers. <sup>5</sup> The most famous American pigeon, Cher Ami, which translates to “dear friend,” saved the lives of the 77th Infantry Division during World War I. <sup>6</sup> The 194 men of this “lost battalion” realized that they were completely surrounded by the enemy. <sup>7</sup> Unable to radio for help because their radio was irreparably damaged they sent a desperate call for help with their last carrier pigeon. <sup>8</sup> Repeatedly shot at by the enemy, Cher Ami triumphed victoriously and delivered the all-important communication, arriving with the message dangling from an injured leg and bearing a bullet in its breast. <sup>9</sup> Its remarkable exploits earned it the honor of being named mascot of the U.S. Signal Corps.

#### 1.5.11.F

17. Which phrase should be enclosed in parentheses to show that it is providing additional, but nonessential, information?

- A serving as spies in sentence 3
- \* B which translates to “dear friend” in sentence 5
- C “lost battalion” in sentence 6
- D Repeatedly shot at by the enemy in sentence 8

*This item looks at a basic function of using parentheses in writing. The stem identifies the rule (“additional, but nonessential information”) and asks students to identify the phrase that best fits this description. The phrases in Answer Options A, C, and D are all information that is essential to the meaning of the sentence and should not be enclosed in parentheses. Only “which translates to ‘dear friend’” from sentence 5 offers a phrase that provides additional, but not essential, information. Option B is the correct answer.*

## WRITING

### 1.5.11.F

18. Which sentence needs a comma?

- A sentence 2
- B sentence 6
- \* C sentence 7
- D sentence 9

*Students are directed to four sentences from the passage and asked to choose the one that needs a comma. Options A and B contain “that” clauses which require no commas. While Option D has a somewhat complex structure, there is no need for a comma. The introductory modifier at the beginning of sentence 7 (Option C) is the only sentence element that should be followed by a comma. Option C is the correct answer.*

### 1.5.11.E

19. Which group of words is repetitive?

- A most famous in sentence 5
- B irreparably damaged in sentence 7
- \* C triumphed victoriously in sentence 8
- D remarkable exploits in sentence 9

*The answer options are limited to two words to guide students toward recognizing repetitive language. An analysis of each phrase is necessary to ascertain the meanings of the words and whether or not they are used correctly. The correct answer is Option C.*

### 1.5.11.E

20. Which sentence stays on topic and could be added to this passage?

- \* A A memorial in France honors 20,000 pigeons killed in war.
- B The ancient Greeks used homing pigeons more than 5,000 years ago.
- C Homing pigeons have been known to fly as far as 600 miles in one day.
- D Pigeons usually live about 15 years, though some live closer to 30.

*Students must consider relevance and logic in choosing the best answer to this item. Option A is the best answer because it remains focused on carrier pigeons and their contribution to the war. Option B introduces the ancient Greeks; Option C focuses only on homing pigeons and the distance they can fly, and Option D brings up a pigeon’s lifespan, which is not relevant to the content of the passage.*

## WRITING

### Writing Passage 6 with Multiple-Choice Items

Read the passage below and then answer questions 21–24.

**1** Armadillos are mammals that live primarily in South America and the southern part of the United States. **2** Their name means the little thing in armor in Spanish. **3** Their shoulders and hindquarters are covered with bony plates, and their midsections are wrapped with ringlike bands. **4** Armadillos are nearly deaf and blind, but they have an incredibly acute sense of smell. **5** This helps them to sniff out insects and worms, even when they're buried deep in the ground. **6** When an armadillo gives birth, she will have four identical babies, either all males or all females. **7** Adult armadillos can run very fast and can use they're long, sharp claws to burrow into the ground very quickly. **8** They can also fill their stomachs and intestines with air and swim with only a nose out of the water. **9** Some armadillos are able to cross small rivers by walking across the bottom. **10** All of those skills make armadillos very well-equipped to handle dangerous situations. **11** One danger that armadillos cannot evade is cold weather; a hard freeze, or even a heavy frost, can kill hundreds of them. **12** Although they're odd-looking, armadillos are definitely interesting animals.

#### 1.5.11.F

21. Choose the correct use of quotation marks in sentence 2.

- A Their name means "the little thing" in armor in Spanish.
- B Their name means "the little thing in armor in Spanish."
- C Their name means "the little thing in armor" in Spanish. \*
- D Their name means "the little thing in armor" in "Spanish."

*The answer options offer four possible placements for quotation marks around a phrase embedded in the sentence. Students must analyze the sentence for meaning and choose the option that correctly sets the phrase apart. Option C is the correct answer.*

#### 1.5.11.E

22. Which word could replace Although in sentence 12 without changing the meaning of the sentence?

- A While \*
- B Since
- C Furthermore
- D Moreover

*Students must decide which transitional expression has a similar meaning and could function in a similar role, that is, to provide the relationship between the clauses. Answer options include both subordinating conjunctions and adverbs often used as transitions. Option A is the best answer.*

## WRITING

### 1.5.11.E

23. Which word is used incorrectly in the passage and should be changed?

- A their in sentence 3
- B they're in sentence 5
- C they're in sentence 7 \*
- D their in sentence 8

*There-they're-their usage remains a common error in student writing. Given the context of the word in each sentence, students must show their understanding of the difference between the adverb form, the possessive form, and the contraction form. Based on its usage in this passage, the correct answer is Option C.*

### 1.5.11.E

24. Which sentence could best be added to this passage?

- A An armadillo reminds me of a dinosaur.
- B My brother once had a pet armadillo.
- C Armadillos do not like each other much.
- D Most armadillos are about the size of a cat. \*

*Students are asked to consider the passage as a whole and determine which of the answer options would best fit with the genre and voice of the piece. All answer options mention armadillos, the topic of the passage, but Options A and B switch to first-person, which is more appropriate in a narrative. Option C adopts informal language not consistent with the remainder of the passage. Option D is the only answer option that offers a fact similar to other facts presented in this informative passage.*

## WRITING

### **WRITING PROMPTS: GENERAL INFORMATION**

The greater part of the writing assessment consists of students' written responses to writing prompts. Eleventh graders will write to two modes: informational and persuasive.

The writing prompts reflect Pennsylvania Academic Standards—Types of Writing—1.4.11.B, and 1.4.11.C.

**1.4.11.B** *Write complex informational pieces (e.g., research papers, analyses, evaluations, essays).*

**1.4.11.C** *Write persuasive pieces.*

### **SAMPLE WRITING PROMPTS AND STUDENT RESPONSES**

There are three writing prompts in this sampler. Written responses are scored on a 1–4-point scale, and student responses at each scoring level have been provided. These examples of student writing have also been annotated.

Each paper receives two scores, one for composition and one for conventions. Mode-specific scoring guidelines precede each group of student papers. The conventions scoring guideline precedes the papers that exemplify conventions scores.

# WRITING

## PSSA INFORMATIONAL SCORING GUIDELINE

4	FOCUS	Sharp, distinct controlling point made about a single topic with evident awareness of task and audience.
	CONTENT DEVELOPMENT	Substantial, relevant, and illustrative content that demonstrates a clear understanding of the purpose. Thorough elaboration with effectively presented information consistently supported with well-chosen details.
	ORGANIZATION	Effective organizational strategies and structures, such as logical order and transitions, which develop a controlling idea.
	STYLE	Precise control of language, stylistic techniques, and sentence structures that creates a consistent and effective tone.
3	FOCUS	Clear controlling point made about a single topic with general awareness of task and audience.
	CONTENT DEVELOPMENT	Adequate, specific, and/or illustrative content that demonstrates an understanding of the purpose. Sufficient elaboration with clearly presented information supported with well-chosen details.
	ORGANIZATION	Organizational strategies and structures, such as logical order and transitions, which develop a controlling idea.
	STYLE	Appropriate control of language, stylistic techniques, and sentence structures that creates a consistent tone.
2	FOCUS	Vague evidence of a controlling point made about a single topic with an inconsistent awareness of task and audience.
	CONTENT DEVELOPMENT	Inadequate, vague content that demonstrates a weak understanding of the purpose. Underdeveloped and/or repetitive elaboration with inconsistently supported information. May be an extended list.
	ORGANIZATION	Inconsistent organizational strategies and structures, such as logical order and transitions, which ineffectively develop a controlling idea.
	STYLE	Limited control of language and sentence structures that creates interference with tone.
1	FOCUS	Little or no evidence of a controlling point made about a single topic with a minimal awareness of task and audience.
	CONTENT DEVELOPMENT	Minimal evidence of content that demonstrates a lack of understanding of the purpose. Superficial, undeveloped writing with little or no support. May be a bare list.
	ORGANIZATION	Little or no evidence of organizational strategies and structures, such as logical order and transitions, which inadequately develop a controlling idea.
	STYLE	Minimal control of language and sentence structures that creates an inconsistent tone.

## WRITING

### INFORMATIONAL WRITING PROMPT

You will have approximately 60 minutes to plan, write, and proofread your response to this writing response.

**Good design is a blend of form and function. What product might you design that would improve people’s lives? Write an essay in which you describe this product and how it would affect people’s lives.**

**Write your response on the next four pages.**

#### Plan

Before you write:

- Read the prompt carefully so you understand exactly what you are being asked to do.
- Consider topic, task, and audience.
- Think about what you want to write.
- Use scratch paper to organize your thoughts. Use strategies like mapping or outlining.

#### Write

As you write:

- Maintain a clear and consistent focus.
- Include specific details; use examples and reasons to support your ideas.
- Use a variety of well-constructed, complete sentences.
- Use a logical organization with an obvious introduction, body, and conclusion.

#### Proofread

After you write:

- ☐ Did you support your ideas with specific details?
- ☐ Do the point of view and tone of the essay remain consistent?
- ☐ Check for capitalization, spelling, sentence structure, punctuation, and usage errors.

**Go on to the next page to begin writing your response.**



## WRITING



### INFORMATIONAL WRITING PROMPT FINAL COPY

Since the origin of human life, homosapiens have constantly sought ways to increase the comfort and efficiency of living. Over the past few millenia, countless technological advances have changed the lives of every person residing on this planet. Perhaps the most notable of these advancements are the widespread innovations of electronic technology in the twenty-first century. Computers, feared and distrusted by skeptical previous generations, now dominate the world. The reason for this is simple; computers and other electronic devices unquestionably increase the ease and efficiency of living. To further raise the practicality of life, I would like to create an electronic device to function as a calendar, a day planner, and an alarm clock. This sleek invention would be logically dubbed the Efficiency Master, or EM for short. Merely inches thick, the EM would be easily wall-mountable to save space. The EM would also feature wireless internet connectivity, allowing it to automatically update and display weather forecasts and other useful information each day. In addition, the EM would be economically friendly, going into a power saving standby mode until motion sensors picked up activity in the room. Finally, the EM would be aesthetically pleasing for home decorators, boasting a sleek design and changeable faceplates. With so many great features, the EM would increase the efficiency and ease of living by keeping

If you need additional space, please continue on the next page.





## WRITING



### INFORMATIONAL WRITING PROMPT (continued) FINAL COPY

an individual's activities organized, eliminating the clutter of planners and alarm clocks, and helping the user get up in the morning.

In today's hectic world, keeping track of one's activities and responsibilities can often times be difficult. However, the EM's day planner function eliminates the hassle. Using a built in microphone, an individual can verbally list what they need to do on a certain day. Then, the EM will automatically play the recording on the assigned day. This valuable feature would prevent an individual from ever forgetting a task that needed to be accomplished.

In addition, the compacting of a calendar, alarm clock, and planner all into one device would eliminate the problem of clutter. With the EM replacing all of these items, the user would no longer need to worry about where to place an alarm clock or trying to read the hasty scrawl of a day planner. Needless to say, the EM's compact design would lead to a cleaner and more space-free bedroom. Thus, the EM would help an individual to live a more comfortable and uncramped life.

Finally, the EM's soothing alarm clock system would alleviate the horrid feeling of being ripped away

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## WRITING



### INFORMATIONAL WRITING PROMPT (continued) FINAL COPY

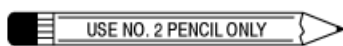
from a luscious sleep in the morning. Using gentle nature sounds, such as a trickling brook or a wind born rustle of leaves, the EM's alarm clock would slowly rouse the sleeper to a state of consciousness. The awakening would be so delicate and smooth that the user would feel completely rejuvenated and awake right away, as if they had simply woken up themselves: after a long night sleep. This peaceful awakening would go on to greatly increase the quality of the user's day.

In conclusion, I would like to create an all-in-one electronic calendar called the Efficiency Master. The EM would feature a day planner and an alarm clock that would serve to increase the efficiency and comfort of the user's day. Utilizing the EM's superb features, an individual could keep track of their daily activities, eliminate the cluster of regular alarm clocks and dayplanners, and receive a soothing awakening in the morning from the specially designed alarm clock. With so many useful assets, the EM could be the next electronic invention to change the way people live their lives. Without question, the human race will continue to seek new ways

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## WRITING



### INFORMATIONAL WRITING PROMPT (continued) FINAL COPY

to improve everyday life.

#### Composition Score 4

There is a sharp and controlling focus with the theme of increasing “the comfort and efficiency of living.” This theme is controlled throughout the paper with statements that mention this efficiency. For instance, at the end of page one the writer states that “the EM (short for Efficiency Master) would increase the efficiency and ease of living...”

Substantial and illustrative content is used for each of the three supporting ideas (organization, clutter reduction, alarm clock). Each subsequent paragraph elaborates on the ideas with effectively presented information that enables the reader to understand the invention. For instance, the EM is “merely inches thick, and would be easily wall-mountable to save space.”

The essay is effectively presented with logical order and transitions. More sophisticated transitions such as “In today’s hectic world” and “Needless to say” partnered with the more straightforward transitions of “In addition” and “Finally” aid the reader’s movement through the essay.

The writer creates a consistent tone by using complex sentences, precise vocabulary, and phrases such as “asthetically pleasing...sleek design and changeable faceplates” and “alleviate the horrid feeling of being ripped away from a luscious sleep in the morning.” The use of complex sentences creates an effective tone.

The essay exemplifies strong and consistent control of composition skills in the informative mode.

**AFTER YOU HAVE CHECKED YOUR WORK, CLOSE THIS WRITING BOOKLET SO YOUR TEACHER WILL KNOW YOU ARE FINISHED.**



## WRITING



### INFORMATIONAL WRITING PROMPT FINAL COPY

You rub your hands together as snow starts falling from the sky and a chilly breeze blows past your face. Yep it is going to be one of those days: freezing cold, wet, and icy. Don't you just wish you had something to shield you from the cold and keep you warm? Well, a heated jacket would be a great invention for those frigid winter days. This jacket would be designed specially to keep you warm, dry, and sheltered from the cold.

This jacket would have a special design, not like just any old coat from the store. It would have heating coils through out the entire jacket, along with a control for the temperature. The material would be water and fire resistant. It would of course be equipt with extra and secret pockets. These pockets would contain insulated gloves, hat, and scarf. Just enough to keep you warm without the bulk of a regular jacket.

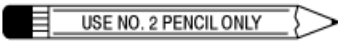
There are many benefits to a heated jacket. It keeps body heat in while also warming the body. The special design helps keep you safe and warm. You don't even have to buy seprate hat, scarf, and gloves, because it of course comes with ones that match. This jacket would be sold in all sizes and styles so it can be a reflection of your personality.

If there was a heated jacket you would not longer have to be afraid in the winter. Parents can buy them for their children so that they can run and play in the snow without

If you need additional space, please continue on the next page.



## WRITING



### INFORMATIONAL WRITING PROMPT (continued) FINAL COPY

the threat of sickness looming near by. You can be kept warm while waiting at the bus stop. NO longer would you have to dread the coldness while shoveling the driveway. Who needs a remote car starter that wastes gas when you have a heated jacket? This is for those short trips that does not give your car enough time to heat up. This heated jacket might even cause you to like winter again.

In conclusion a heated jacket is just the thing to have during cold and unbearable winters. Maybe it is time you stopped working your life around the cold and snow. So fight the winter blues with a new heated jacket!

#### Composition Score 3

The essay is focused on a jacket that will protect a person from the cold. A clear controlling point is made with a general awareness of task and audience.

The content is adequate and specific with some illustrative content. The writer demonstrates that he/she understands the purpose. The content is clearly presented with well-chosen details. There is some unevenness as some material is presented as a list.

The organizational plan uses a logical order with a strong introduction, three paragraph topics, and a good conclusion. The plan is not set up in the introduction, but transitions are used leading into the paragraphs.

The strong voice with specific vocabulary and phrases such as "without the bulk of a regular jacket," "reflection of your personality," and "so fight the winter blues with a new heated jacket" appeal to the audience.

This essay exemplifies adequate control of composition skills in the informative mode.

If you need additional space, please continue on the next page.



## WRITING



### INFORMATIONAL WRITING PROMPT FINAL COPY

Collisions involving motor vehicles occur all too often in the world today. Reckless and impatient drivers are everywhere, and it is ultimately impossible to avoid them on the road. Improving the future of driving safety is something all Americans should be working towards. Car accidents are at an all time high and this won't improve on its own; that is why I believe inventing and requiring yellow tail lights on all cars would improve people's lives.

These yellow lights would appear when ever the driver is not accelerating. These lights would allow following cars plenty of time to slow down and let them know they need to stay alert. Producing these lights and requiring all future car models to have them would keep the reckless and impatient drivers safer.

The number of car accidents within the teenage drivers and the nonattentive working people are ridiculous. I strongly believe that this invention of automatic, yellow, tail lights will dramatically decrease that number and improve people's lives.

If you need additional space, please continue on the next page.



## WRITING

### **Composition Score 2**

The reader is made aware of the point introduced in the first paragraph that safety on the road needs to be improved. Because of limited and inadequate content, this point is not consistently maintained.

There is not enough content to adequately describe the invention and develop the theme. The description is vague and the reader is unsure how this device will work.

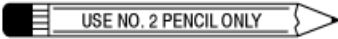
The paper also lacks a plan and transitions. There is some logical order, as the description of the invention follows the point in the first paragraph, but the organization is weakened by the conclusion that introduces a new idea of teenage drivers.

Stylistically this paper is more adequate than limited, as a couple of the sentences are controlled and there are a few specific vocabulary words, such as “reclas,” “collisions,” and “excelerating.”

While the style and organization are nearly adequate, the lack of content and wavering focus detract enough that the student achieves a score of 2.

The essay exemplifies limited control of composition skills in the informative mode.

# WRITING



## INFORMATIONAL WRITING PROMPT FINAL COPY

If I had to build something that would improve human lives I would make something that would change fast food and other unhealthy food into good food but still had the same taste. The effects of that would be less obesity and less heart attacks and lower blood pressures.

### Composition Score 1

The essay is minimal in all elements of composing. This is simply an answer to the prompt. There is barely enough to score. If the student had written less, it would be considered insufficient. The student states what he/she would design (something that would change fast food into good food) and why ("less obesity and less heart attacks and lower blood pressures").

The essay exemplifies minimal control of composition skills in the informative mode.

If you need additional space, please continue on the next page.





## WRITING

### INFORMATIONAL WRITING PROMPT

You will have approximately 60 minutes to plan, write, and proofread your response to this writing response.

**“Great thoughts speak only to a thoughtful mind, but great actions speak to all humankind.”—Emily P. Bissell**

**How do “great actions speak to all humankind”? Write an essay that explains your understanding of this quotation.**

**Write your response on the next four pages.**

#### Plan

Before you write:

- Read the prompt carefully so you understand exactly what you are being asked to do.
- Consider topic, task, and audience.
- Think about what you want to write.
- Use scratch paper to organize your thoughts. Use strategies like mapping or outlining.

#### Write

As you write:

- Maintain a clear and consistent focus.
- Include specific details; use examples and reasons to support your ideas.
- Use a variety of well-constructed, complete sentences.
- Use a logical organization with an obvious introduction, body, and conclusion.

#### Proofread

After you write:

- ☐ Did you support your ideas with specific details?
- ☐ Do the point of view and tone of the essay remain consistent?
- ☐ Check for capitalization, spelling, sentence structure, punctuation, and usage errors.

**Go on to the next page to begin writing your response.**



## WRITING



### INFORMATIONAL WRITING PROMPT FINAL COPY

In the past years, there have been many significant adjustments that have made our world a better place for people to live in, especially in America. These changes and adjustments were influenced by the actions of our fellow citizens. Many times these actions were risky and dangerous but in the long run it is what turned America right side up again. Like Emily Bissell once said, "Great thoughts speak only to a thoughtful mind, but great actions speak to all humankind." There have been many people ~~who~~ besides Martin Luther King Jr, Rosa Parks, and Roberto Clemente who thought of ideas that would benefit our world, but unlike these inspirational models they leave their ideas bottled inside. It is not these bottled ideas that have an impact on humankind but these implemented ideas can go a long way.

Martin Luther King Jr., for instance felt that racism was wrong and something should be done. To put an end to this nonsense that the color of your skin determines who you are inside. The idea may have come to him one day while sitting on the couch that someone should speak out, speak out and represent his race, but he did not let it go only as far as his thoughts. Martin Luther King Jr., himself set up a mission that he would speak out or try to wake up America and then persuade it that human is human. Color is just a color everyone in this universe is a different color and he wanted the world to know that because of this a human should be analyzed by their character, how bad and how good, not how dark and how light you are, because no matter how you look at it we are all made up of the same thing. It was Martin L. King's speeches and acts that helped others see his side.

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## WRITING



### INFORMATIONAL WRITING PROMPT FINAL COPY

clearly not the thoughts he once had at home sitting on the couch.

Another influential person who spoke out to human-kind by her actions was Rosa Parks. Like Martin L. King she felt that she should not be compared, analyzed, and belittled by others because of the color of her skin. One day while sitting on a bus she was told she had to yield her seat to someone else because they were white and that she should move to the back of the bus. She didn't have to get up because the person was sick, or old, or pregnant but because the person was white. We can imagine what she was thinking, why did she have to get up? Could there be a more legitimate reason other than the color of her skin? Apparently there was no other reason for she felt she did not have to succumb to such a request. She decided she would not yield her seat to someone who thought they were better than her because of a color. Until this day we talk about the actions she decided to take that day on the bus. It was her actions and not her thoughts that made an impact on others.

Another role model who is not talked about nearly as much as others but whose actions went a long way was Roberto Clemente. Roberto Clemente was a well-known baseball player admitted into the Hall of Fame. It is true he was admitted because of his ability to play baseball but also because of his good deeds. Once there was a tragedy that occurred in Nicaragua. An earthquake left many cities almost destitute of both their basic necessities and their hope. Roberto Clemente felt that something should be done to help these people in dire need. The feeling was so persistent that he felt

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## WRITING



### INFORMATIONAL WRITING PROMPT FINAL COPY

he would himself help these unfortunate people of Nicaragua. He spent millions of dollars on necessary things for the people and on route towards Nicaragua his plane crashed killing him. Although he did not reach Nicaragua his actions did, for they touched the hearts of many. He also didn't just think about what could be done but he actually went out and did it.

We can see with these examples that because of the actions of others many lives were changed forever. Many times it was certain events that inspired them to act and if it wasn't for those actions they took, our world would be in disarray right now. This should serve as a lesson to us too. If we think of something that can help our world go for it because it is these great actions that speak out to all of humankind and go down in history forever as another great action by someone that helped better our world.

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## WRITING

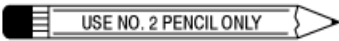
### Composition Score 4

This essay has a controlling theme strongly stated in the introduction. Citing Emily Bissell's quote, the writer refers to great actions as the "implemented ideas" of "inspirational models" like Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks, and Roberto Clemente. After illustrating in great detail the situations confronting the chosen examples, the writer tells how each person took action to change the world ["It was Martin L. King's speeches and acts that helped others see his side clearly not the thoughts he once had at home sitting on the couch"]. This type of organization allows the writer to effectively emphasize purpose in writing, in this case, to interpret and explain. The writer also thoroughly examines the situation each example faced, embellishing each with details that illustrate their reactions in light of the Bissell quote ["She (Rosa Parks) didn't have to get up because the person was sick, or old, or pregnant but because the person was white. We can imagine what she was thinking. . . . It was her actions and not her thoughts that made an impact on others"].

The vocabulary is rich and selective, and it works to advocate for the writer's viewpoint. Verbs such as "succumb," "inspired," "wake up," and "speak out," along with sharp images ["bottled ideas"] and edgy phrases ["legitimate reason other than the color of her skin"], all carry an evocative tone that reinforces the writer's message. Also, the sentences are designed to influence the reader ["An earthquake left many cities almost destitute of both their basic necessities and their hope"].

This essay exemplifies strong and consistent control of composition skills in the informational mode.

## WRITING



### INFORMATIONAL WRITING PROMPT FINAL COPY

"Actions speak louder than words," a simple phrase that has been proven to be universally true. Throughout history others have been countless incidents when in order to change something, one must take action. Many injustices have been challenged by the action of a few.

Perhaps one of the greatest examples of action playing an important part in an issue is the racial rights movement. African Americans all over America found that their words were not powerful enough to fight the Jim Crow laws, so they took action. Frustrated with the unfair rules on buses, African Americans boycotted buses, hitting the bus company hard in the pocket, and drawing attention to their cause. Rosa Park's story sent the media into a frenzy while shining light on a topic some may have otherwise ignored. Even a million letters to the editor about racial injustice couldn't bring as much uproar about the unfair treatment of Blacks as the bold actions they took could.

Although some actions people take to get the word out about their opinions are used to better society, some have much darker intentions. Terrorists have found that unfortunately the only way for their message to be heard is through violence. It's horrifying, but it is true. The recent

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## WRITING



### INFORMATIONAL WRITING PROMPT FINAL COPY

attacks on the world trade centers was a frightening reminder how much louder actions speak than words. In early 2001 the general public hadn't even heard of the terrorist group Al Qaeda. However after they attacked us on its own soil, suddenly everyone was talking about Al Qaeda and Osama Bin Laden. There is evidence that they had threatened the United States, but since they didn't seem too dangerous, their threatening words were not taken seriously until they did some

Actions, whether they are good intentioned, spreading the word about injustices going on in our own country, or evil killing thousands of innocent people in order to draw attention to a cause, most definitely speak louder than words.

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## WRITING

### Composition Score 3

The writer clearly states a main idea in the introduction [“ ‘Actions speak louder than words’ . . . has been proven to be universally true”]. The writer then uses two examples, the civil rights movement and modern terrorists, to support the main idea [“African Americans all over America found that words were not powerful enough to fight the Jim Crow laws so they took action” and “attacks on the world trade centers was a frightening reminder how much louder actions speak then words”].

Effective transitions are used to unify the essay. The third paragraph introduces the second example with a reference to the first example [“Although some actions people take to get the word out about their opinions are used to better society”].

There is some clichéd language [“into a frenzy,” “attacked the U.S. on its own soil”]. The student missed opportunities to elaborate [What exactly were the actions Rosa Parks took? What was the thought behind her actions?]. Both choices result in only adequate development and a controlling point that is not sharp and distinct.

This essay exemplifies adequate control of compositional skills in the informational mode.



## WRITING



### INFORMATIONAL WRITING PROMPT FINAL COPY

Great action speak to all human kind because it is simply some thing great. Great actions are more than just a thought.

Many people throught out history have done great things. This right sound funny but great people who do great things are great And great actions will be rewarded

I also think that in order to do great actions you must have great thoughts. It's like you cant have one with out the other. Because If you cant think great thoughts then you cant do great actions

#### Composition Score 2

The writer's point is vague ["Great actions are more than just a thought"], and the writing that follows neither clarifies nor elaborates on this idea. In the second paragraph, the writer states, "Many people . . . have done great things. . . . people who do great things are great. And great actions will be rewarded," but then fails to tell the reader who they are or what they have done. The entire piece lacks strong development and specific support. The language is vague, repetitive, and limited (the word "great" is used a dozen times in the twelve handwritten lines).

This essay exemplifies limited control of composition skills in the informational mode.

If you need additional space, please continue on the next page.



## WRITING



### INFORMATIONAL WRITING PROMPT FINAL COPY

A thoughtful mind is always full of great thoughts, but you don't need all of that to do good things.

For instance, things as generous as picking up someone's pencil or helping your mom do things around the house. You don't need a thoughtful mind, great action speak to almost everyone.

#### Composition Score 1

The writer demonstrates minimal understanding of the task and the purpose. The brief statements are unsupported and the student attempts to rephrase the quotation instead of explaining it. The example offered ["picking up someone's pencil or helping your mom do things around the house"] presents a lapse in continuity with the next sentence ["You don't need a thoughtful mind, great action speak to almost everyone"]. The actions mentioned are thoughtful but hardly great actions. Essentially, the essay is confusing, lacks a beginning and an ending, and has an inconsistent tone.

This essay exemplifies little or no control of composition skills in the informational mode.

If you need additional space, please continue on the next page.



# WRITING

## PSSA PERSUASIVE SCORING GUIDELINE

4

FOCUS	Sharp, distinct controlling point presented as a position and made convincing through a clear, thoughtful, and substantiated argument with evident awareness of task and audience.
CONTENT DEVELOPMENT	Substantial, relevant, and illustrative content that demonstrates a clear understanding of the purpose. Thoroughly elaborated argument that includes a clear position consistently supported with precise and relevant evidence. Rhetorical (persuasive) strategies are evident.
ORGANIZATION	Effective organizational strategies and structures, such as logical order and transitions, to develop a position supported with a purposeful presentation of content.
STYLE	Precise control of language, stylistic techniques, and sentence structures that creates a consistent and effective tone.

3

FOCUS	Clear controlling point presented as a position and made convincing through a credible and substantiated argument with general awareness of task and audience.
CONTENT DEVELOPMENT	Adequate, specific and/or illustrative content that demonstrates an understanding of the purpose. Sufficiently elaborated argument that includes a clear position supported with some relevant evidence. Rhetorical (persuasive) strategies may be evident.
ORGANIZATION	Organizational strategies and structures, such as logical order and transitions, to develop a position supported with sufficient presentation of content.
STYLE	Appropriate control of language, stylistic techniques, and sentence structures that creates a consistent tone.

2

FOCUS	Vague evidence of a controlling point presented as a position that may lack a credible and/or substantiated argument with an inconsistent awareness of task and audience.
CONTENT DEVELOPMENT	Inadequate, vague content that demonstrates a weak understanding of the purpose. Insufficiently elaborated argument that includes an underdeveloped position supported with little evidence.
ORGANIZATION	Inconsistent organizational strategies and structures, such as logical order and transitions, to develop a position with inadequate presentation of content.
STYLE	Limited control of language and sentence structures that creates interference with tone.

1

FOCUS	Little or no evidence of a controlling point presented as a position that lacks a credible and/or substantiated argument with minimal awareness of task and audience.
CONTENT DEVELOPMENT	Minimal evidence of content that demonstrates a lack of understanding of the purpose. Unelaborated argument that includes an undeveloped position supported with minimal or no evidence.
ORGANIZATION	Little or no evidence of organizational strategies and structures, such as logical order and transitions, to develop a position with insufficient presentation of content.
STYLE	Minimal control of language and sentence structures that creates an inconsistent tone.

## WRITING

### PERSUASIVE WRITING PROMPT

You will have approximately 60 minutes to plan, write, and proofread your response to this writing prompt.

**At what age are people ready to assume the rights of adulthood?**  
**Write an essay to persuade others that your position is a valid one.**

**Write your response on the next four pages.**

#### Plan

Before you write:

- Read the prompt carefully so you understand exactly what you are being asked to do.
- Consider topic, task, and audience.
- Think about what you want to write.
- Use scratch paper to organize your thoughts. Use strategies like mapping or outlining.

#### Write

As you write:

- Maintain a clear and consistent position or claim.
- Include specific details; use examples and reasons to support your ideas.
- Use a variety of well-constructed, complete sentences.
- Use a logical organization with an obvious introduction, body, and conclusion.

#### Proofread

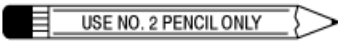
After you write:

- ☐ Did you support your ideas with specific details?
- ☐ Do the point of view and tone of the essay remain consistent?
- ☐ Check for capitalization, spelling, sentence structure, punctuation, and usage errors.

**Go on to the next page to begin writing your response.**



## WRITING



### PERSUASIVE WRITING PROMPT FINAL COPY

It requires a lot of thinking to decide when to grant somebody the rights of adulthood. Making a judgement is not black and white, and for the most part should be decided on a person-to-person basis. However, the world we live in treats it somewhat differently, and people want it to be objective rather than subjective. Society dictates how we think and how we act, and in this case society wants all people lumped into one of two groups: ready for adulthood, and not ready for adulthood. So considering that, when do I think people are ready for adulthood? I think the age someone is ready is sixteen. You probably think that sounds like a very young age, but just think about all of the responsibilities we give sixteen-year-olds; once you consider the burden society puts on those who are sixteen, you may start to think sixteen is the new twenty-six.

We've all been raised on the idea that driving a vehicle is one of the biggest and most important responsibilities a person can have. Consider the age people are legally allowed to operate a car. That age is indeed sixteen. We as a society accept the notion that somebody who is sixteen is capable enough to drive on roadways. With two tons of glass and steel all under their control. I think that fact is a pretty big step toward considering somebody an adult. But why does a sixteen-year-old need to drive? Are they going to school, or to see their friends? That is possible, although there are a few other, more adult-like, places they may have to visit. Places like work, or the bank, or even an insurance office.

Now that our newest addition to the sixteen-year-old bracket has a flashy new car, he is going to have to make car and insurance payments. Well no worries there, because he is now old enough to work at a large number of different jobs. Granted, one can begin working before age sixteen, barring a job cashiering or operating any type of machinery, but the most widely accepted age to begin employment is sixteen. Having a job at such a young age means

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## WRITING



### PERSUASIVE WRITING PROMPT (continued) FINAL COPY

very strict laws regarding labor and work-hours per week, but that should not undermine the fact that it is incredibly difficult to juggle a work schedule with a school, and possibly a sport, schedule as well. And yet our country decides that sixteen is the prime year to allow this to happen. After all, working will pay for the car that is needed to drive to work, and the teenager is also old enough to pay taxes (automatically deducted from the paycheck) and pay for insurance as well. But alas, all of this money needs a place to be kept safely. Well, since our friend is sixteen he can go ahead and open up a checking account at his local bank.

Since he has so much money flowing in from his new job, our guy is forced to open up a checking account at the closest Wachovia bank. He will be considered old enough, by law, to have his very own check book, bank account, and an optional check card (which includes debit and Visa credit). Virtually all stores will accept his check card as proper payment, so he is now able to drive to the store after work, and buy some school supplies with his new check card. Thus he has almost completely severed all of his dependence on his guardians. In my honest opinion, the driving, working, learning, paying teenager is as much of an adult as the adults who are legally responsible for his well-being.

Numerous responsibilities are available for teens when they turn sixteen. They can drive and work, as well as own their own bank account to control their assets. As far as I am concerned, being considered an adult is at the mercy of the society you live in. For the United States, the age really for adulthood should be considered at sixteen, because that is the age when all new doors open up for that teenager.

If you need additional space, please continue on the next page.



## WRITING

### Composition Score 4

There is a sharp, distinct controlling point presented as a position (“You probably think that (16) sounds like a very young age, but just think about all of the responsibilities we give sixteen-year-olds; once you consider the burden society puts on those who are sixteen, you may start to think sixteen is the new twenty-six”). The clear, thoughtful, and substantiated arguments throughout the remainder of the paper help this essay remain focused.

The writer’s position is consistently supported with precise and relevant evidence (“... very strict laws regarding labor and work-hours per week”). Clear understanding of the purpose is evidenced by supporting details (“... it is incredibly difficult to juggle a work schedule with a school, and possibly a sport schedule as well.”). Rhetorical strategies are evident, as the student points out an opposing view (“Granted, one can begin working before age sixteen, barring a job cashiering or operating any type of machinery, but the most widely accepted age to begin employment is sixteen”).

The writer uses many sophisticated organizational techniques. Tie-ins between the introduction (“... think about all of the responsibilities we give sixteen-year-olds ...”) and conclusion (“Numerous responsibilities are available for teens when they turn sixteen”) are skillful. A unifying idea transitions the reader from one paragraph to the next (“... checking account at his local bank. Since he has so much money”). Transitional phrases (“As far as I am concerned”) and words (“Thus”) are used within each paragraph. The logical order is developed in a purposeful progression of details evolving from prior details (driving, car and insurance payments, working for money, and then bank account).

Strong voice is demonstrated with “Well no worries there” and “But alas, all of this money. ...” There is an effective humorous tone throughout with rhetorical questions and phrases directed at the reader (“But why does a sixteen-year-old need to drive?”). This essay demonstrates precise control of language, stylistic techniques, and sentence structures.

The essay exemplifies strong and consistent control of composition skills in the persuasive mode.

## WRITING



### PERSUASIVE WRITING PROMPT FINAL COPY

What is it to assume the right of adulthood? When do people grow mature and stretch out of their childhood? At what age do most people start making their own decisions? It is very hard to pick an age and license them as an adult, but I would highlight a person to become more mature at the wondrous age of sixteen.

To assume the rights of adulthood is to be able to take responsibility for the actions of oneself and to also be very mature with your decision making. It is characterized as acting like an adult and being able to take leadership among the other people who have not yet reached their maturity level.

Many professional businesses begin hiring at the age of sixteen and to me, that is saying that most humans are classified as being an adult at that age. Also, in most states, sixteen is the age where people are permitted to get their driving license. It is very dangerous to drive and it takes a massive amount of responsibility, so to be given the privilege to drive at the age of sixteen is really showing that most people look at adults at that age.

I believe that sixteen is a very good age to base people as adults. At this age, for me, I have noticed that there is more peer pressure than ever before and I have been faced to make so many important decisions. I've been having to take responsibilities for my own actions and other adults expect me to be very mature and take leadership, because I am sixteen years of age.

I have a very good example, about something true that happened

If you need additional space, please continue on the next page.





## WRITING



### PERSUASIVE WRITING PROMPT (continued) FINAL COPY

to a sixteen year old male, that proves that this age qualifies a person as an adult. One day, in the state of Florida, there were two sixteen year old friends that were wrestling around and trying to imitate wrestling moves that they saw on television. One of the boys had lifted his friend up in the air and slammed him on the ground, forcing his friend to land on his neck. Even though they had been messing around, the boy who had got slammed on the ground, was said to have died on impact. The state and courts had heard the story and looked over all of the evidence, but because the boy was sixteen years old, he was classified as an adult and is now serving a life sentence in jail.

I believe that when turned sixteen, it is time to start looking towards the future and planning ahead to succeed in life. It is a big responsibility, but that is what I started doing, and I strongly believe that people are able to assume the rights of adulthood at the age of sixteen.

If you need additional space, please continue on the next page.



## WRITING

### Composition Score 3

The essay has a clear controlling point, presented as a position, that sixteen is the age one should be considered an adult. Each subsequent paragraph substantiates the argument with evident awareness of task and audience.

While adequate, the content is neither substantial nor specific. Relevant evidence, such as the responsibility needed to obtain a driver's license and "peer pressure," is glossed over without substantiation. In the fifth paragraph, there is a clear narrative example of a 16-year-old being tried as an adult that substantiates the point.

The organization utilizes logical order to develop the position. The second paragraph introduces the ideas of responsibility, mature decision making, acting like an adult, and leadership. Each of these concepts is elaborated upon in subsequent paragraphs. There is an introduction and conclusion. Transitional words ("Also") and phrases ("At this age" and "Even though") help move the reader through this essay.

Rhetorical questions at the commencement of this response help to draw in the reader ("When do people grow mature and stretch out of their childhood?"). Personal voice ("At this age, for me, I have noticed") enhances the style. Words such as "wondrous" and "privelage" demonstrate the writer's appropriate control of language.

The essay exemplifies adequate control of composition skills in the persuasive mode.

## WRITING



### PERSUASIVE WRITING PROMPT FINAL COPY

People are ready to assume the rights of adulthood at age twenty because the teenage years are gone and one is able to understand what is right and what is wrong. Here are some examples of what people might do to assume the rights of adulthood. Some people might have an apartment or have moved in with someone.

Some people might be in college. Some people might have gotten their associates degree in a tech school, four year college or scholarship.

Some people might have moved in with another person they love. They might have gotten married. They might have moved to another state or city.

Some people might have just met someone when they are twenty. They could be settled in and be married.

Many people might be in college.

Some people might have graduated from college. Some people could have failed college and be kick out.

Some people could go for further education after college to become a doctor. Some people could go to medical school and law school. Some could not go to college at all.

If you need additional space, please continue on the next page.



## WRITING



### PERSUASIVE WRITING PROMPT (continued) FINAL COPY

Also, people could have went to a tech school. Some could go to Walser Tech or Jackson's Trade. Some people could have dropped out of a tech school. Some could have gotten accepted to a tech school. Some people could have went to a four year college. Also few people could have went to Sawyer State College on scholarship.

I feel that when you are age twenty you are ready to assume the rights of adulthood. Some people might have moved in with someone. Many people might be in college. Also people could have went to a tech school. A few people go to Sawyer State College on Scholarship.

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## WRITING

### Composition Score 2

The controlling point presented (“People are ready to assume the rights of adulthood at age twenty”) lacks a credible and substantiated argument.

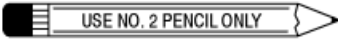
The content presented informs the reader by listing experiences that might occur when one turns twenty, such as getting married, moving to another state, or going to college. These experiences are not developed and do not persuade the reader. Rhetorical strategies are not present.

The organizational plan presented in the introductory paragraph is carried out. The supporting topics listed in the introduction are individually addressed in body paragraphs and then restated in the conclusion. Each supporting paragraph topic is given its own sentence in both the introductory and concluding paragraphs. The writer has not demonstrated the skill of combining ideas nor unifying concepts. Transitions between paragraphs are absent except for one “Also.” The body paragraphs merely list thoughts pertaining to the topic; no internal organization of paragraphs is present.

The repetitive subject-verb pattern “some people might” interferes with tone. The absence of specific vocabulary demonstrates limited control of language.

The essay exemplifies limited control of composition skills in the persuasive mode.

## WRITING



### PERSUASIVE WRITING PROMPT FINAL COPY

My opion is that once you  
turn 18 I think you are more  
mature. You can make choices for yourself.  
You are more wiser and more intelegent.  
Adult hood is only half your life.

Adults should know right from wrong.  
Adults should act their age and not  
their shoe size.

Adults are the ones who teach  
younger childrens about thier choices.  
Adults should know about life by  
this time.

#### Composition Score 1

The writer presents a position ("My opion is that once you turn 18 I think you are more mature"), but fails to substantiate the argument. There is minimal awareness of task and audience as the student discusses what adults should do.

The unelaborated list of things adults should do demonstrates a lack of understanding of the purpose. Examples of how you are more mature, intelligent, and wise at the age of 18 are absent from this essay.

While there is an introductory sentence, there is insufficient presentation of content to organize and develop a position. There is no evidence of the ability to transition.

The repetition of "Adults should" and use of simple sentences results in a flat tone. Control of language is not adequately demonstrated in this short piece.

The essay exemplifies little or no control of composition skills in the persuasive mode.

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## WRITING

### PSSA CONVENTIONS SCORING GUIDELINE

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4

- | Thorough control of sentence formation.
  - | Few errors, if any, are present in grammar, usage, spelling, and punctuation, but the errors that are present do not interfere with meaning.
- 

3

- | Adequate control of sentence formation.
  - | Some errors may be present in grammar, usage, spelling, and punctuation, but few, if any, of the errors that are present may interfere with meaning.
- 

2

- | Limited and/or inconsistent control of sentence formation. Some sentences may be awkward or fragmented
  - | Many errors may be present in grammar, usage, spelling, and punctuation, and some of those errors may interfere with meaning.
- 

1

- | Minimal control of sentence formation. Many sentences are awkward and fragmented.
  - | Many errors may be present in grammar, usage, spelling, and punctuation, and many of those errors may interfere with meaning.
-

## WRITING



### INFORMATIONAL WRITING PROMPT FINAL COPY

We have all heard the saying "money doesn't grow on trees," but has anyone ever asked why not? If money grew on trees many people's lives would become much easier and less complex. Perhaps the invention of a money growing tree would solve universal problems, in result creating a so called "utopian" society for everyone. The designing of a money growing tree could be the most effective improvement to the human race, creating better lives for all.

Designing this "money tree" would be the most difficult part of the entire process. The tree would have to be adaptable to all climates and regions. Without this trait, the tree would be useless because it would not be accessible by everyone. In order for this tree to grow anywhere it would have to withstand all extremes: heat; cold, permafrost, droughts, rain seasons, pollution, and all types of weather. The tree would have to be rather short so humans could pick the money off easily. Perhaps a deciduous tree would work best. In the autumn all the leaves, or money, would fall off allowing people to rake up the bills. One essential part of this product would be the type of currency it would grow. Either the world would have to come together under one type of currency, or there would have to be different species of the tree, each one growing a different nation's money. One thing is for certain, everyone would have to adopt a paper currency in order for it to grow. Reproduction and growth would be essential to the trees success. The seeds of the tree would have to be easily transferred and dispersed. Perhaps some types of

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## WRITING



**INFORMATIONAL WRITING PROMPT (continued)**  
**FINAL COPY**

the trees could bear fruit so the birds could help disperse the seeds. The seeds would need to be growable in all types of soil. They would also need to germinate and sprout rather quickly. All of these concepts are very important considerations to be used during the designing of the money tree. Designing the money tree would take determination; but the grueling work would pay off. The money tree would quickly improve the lives of many people across the globe.

Once the tree was successful in growing throughout the globe all problems of poverty would end. Third world countries would no longer exist and millions of people would not die everyday from diseases with cures just because they have no money for medical treatment. Homelessness would be a unpleasant memory. Sanitation <sup>in all nations</sup> would prevent sicknesses and clean water would be available to everyone. To the poverty stricken the money tree would be a blessing. Child labor would end along with horrible working conditions. World hunger would also be eliminated by the money tree. No more starvation and famine plaguing the globe. By bringing an end to poverty, the money tree would change people's lives in other aspects as well.

The money tree would allow people to live free and healthy lives. Social classes would be a relic of the past and government corruption would be as archaic to the future as William Shakespeare's plays. Humans would have more free time to discover inner talents. Time would no longer be an issue because everyone would have all the time in the world. Conformity would be replaced by a new and unique individualism as people become more

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**GO ON** 

## WRITING



### INFORMATIONAL WRITING PROMPT (continued) FINAL COPY

familiar with creativity and inner worth. The money tree might allow individuals to make peace not only with themselves but with others. We might resort to a kind of frontier life and "rugged individualism" as we become more in touch with the nature around us. A religious revival might bring more people back to God, now that everyone is worry free. Certainly, the money tree could be gratified for creating utopian community.

The money tree could also help the environment as well as human society. Trees would be a new source of life, therefore the rainforests and environment would be saved. Pollution would decrease as people try to protect the money trees. More trees would result in cleaner air and more homes for wildlife. Essentially, everyone would become an avid tree hugger.

Obviously, the design of the money tree would tremendously help all of mankind. The tree would end poverty, world hunger, stress, conformity, corruption, the destruction of the environment, and many more problems of today's society. Maybe the key to happiness can be found in the roots of the money tree, nourishing the entire planet with their healing power.

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## WRITING

### **Conventions Score 4**

The essay demonstrates thorough control of sentence formation. It is made up of advanced sentences like “In order for this tree to grow anywhere it would have to withstand all extremes: heat, cold, permafrost, droughts, rain seasons, pollution, and all types of weather.”

Few errors are present in grammar (“a” for “an”), usage, spelling (“transferred” for “transferred”), and punctuation (a few missing commas). The errors that are present do not interfere with meaning.

The essay exemplifies strong and consistent control of all elements of conventions.

## WRITING



### INFORMATIONAL WRITING PROMPT FINAL COPY

The quote, "great actions speak to all humankind," expresses that good deeds go a long way. When a person does something nice for another, it will be noticed and remembered. The examples a person sets for others are crucial to human society today. If a person notices a good action towards another person being done, they might commit to a great action as well.

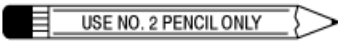
One way that actions speak to humankind is through school students helping one another. If a student needs help in a school subject, a student that understands the topic should help the student. This action will be noticed by teachers as well as classmates. Because of helping the troubled student just once, the classmates might help someone when they are in the same situation. Also, the helpful student may receive an award or recognition from his or her teacher for the good deed.

Another example of actions being noticed to all humankind is the support of flood victims in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Many citizens were dedicated to raising money for the people who were affected by the flooding months ago. The reason why money, food, and other items were donated to the victims is because people noticed others being supportive and decided to help also. All because of a few citizens' actions, the entire city joined in raising money. The flood victims are most likely very grateful.

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## WRITING



### INFORMATIONAL WRITING PROMPT FINAL COPY

to the people of Pittsburgh who have showed support. I am certain that in the future, other surrounding cities will remember what Pittsburgh citizens have done for the people in need and will help their own city in similar situations.

A third method of great actions speaking to humankind is helping the elderly and disabled. Many times, I have seen my parents hold doors for people in wheelchairs, or I noticed my friends volunteering at hospitals and senior citizen homes. Experiencing these situations around me have led me to volunteering to help those around me. It is obvious the people of which my friends, my family, or I help, appreciate our actions. If my parents' and friends' actions have influenced me, they have more than likely influenced others into going out of their way to help other people also.

In conclusion, the quote, "great actions speak to all humankind," is valid because people's actions rub off on other people. The good deeds people accomplish are noticed by many other people. A helpful person may receive great recognition for his or her actions in the future. The examples set by people affect others all around the world.

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## WRITING

### Conventions Score 4

The writer demonstrates strong sentence formation skills using a variety of complex sentence formations, including embedding ["The quote, 'great actions speak to all humankind,' expresses that good deeds go a long way"] and extension ["Many citizens were dedicated to raising money for the people who were affected by the flooding months ago"]. Punctuation and capitalization are also correct. There is one spelling error, "recieve." There are a few usage errors ["have showed" for "have shown"], incorrect prepositions ["to" for "by"], and a few agreement errors ["Experiencing these situations around me have led me to volunteering"], but these errors do not obstruct the reading or interfere with meaning.

This essay exemplifies strong and consistent control of all elements of conventions.

## WRITING



### PERSUASIVE WRITING PROMPT FINAL COPY

In life there are many ideas of when an adolescent reaches adulthood. Whether it be 16 or 24, no one really knows. 18, however is the prime age of a teenager and is when they should be considered an adult. At this age one is expected to attend college on their own, legally become an adult and go to jail, and also, for example a driving curfew is eliminated.

First, when an adolescent turns 18 they are legally, by law, considered an adult. This is true because now if a federal offense is committed the person can go to jail. Also, 18 is the age where you will begin to pay more taxes. You will pay more because now you are considered an adult by the government and will receive the same treatment as other adults.

Second, as a teen turns 18 there is a certain responsibility standard for the "now adult". They are expected to act way more maturely and realize their consequences of their actions. For example, the driving curfew for teens is eliminated at the age of 18. This is done because now, as an adult, the 18 year old is expected to be more responsible so therefore they become exempt from the curfew.

Finally, once a person turns 18, they are expected to continue on to college. Once that is accomplished and the person is in college they are more than likely on their own. The person now has to schedule his or her time according to what needs to be done whether it be: homework, wash clothes, work, go to class, go to practice ect. The adult is responsible for themselves now that they are out in the world by themselves.

If you need additional space, please continue on the next page.



## WRITING



### PERSUASIVE WRITING PROMPT (continued) FINAL COPY

overall, 18 years of age is when a teen should be considered an adult. At this age one is legally considered an adult, more responsibilities come into play, and worse consequences for actions appear. As an 18 year old male or female you are now responsible for yourself and that is what an adult is, responsible.

#### Conventions Score 3

The writer demonstrates thorough control of sentence formation. The essay has both simple and complex sentences formed correctly.

The essay contains a variety of usage errors. There is a pattern of pronoun/antecedent disagreements (“... one is expected to attend college on their own ...”). There are also agreement lapses in items in a series (“At this age one is expected to attend college on their own ... and also ... a driving curfew is eliminated” rather than, “... and no longer has to follow the driving curfew”). Similarly, in the final paragraph of the first page, “... what needs to be done ... homework, wash clothes, work, go to class, go to practice ...,” would be parallel if it read, “... washing clothes, working, going to class, going to practice ...”

There are scattered spelling errors of more difficult words (“adelescent,” “committed,” and “recieve”). There is a pattern of errors in the more difficult skill of placing commas in complex sentences.

Few of the errors present in the essay interfere with its reading. The errors that do exist are on higher level conventions skills.

The essay exemplifies adequate control of all elements of conventions.

If you need additional space, please continue on the next page.





## WRITING



### PERSUASIVE WRITING PROMPT FINAL COPY

As a teenager after getting your driver's license, the next big thing to look forward to is becoming an adult. Adulthood gives people the freedom to not have to listen to their parents, for every decision in life. The age people are ready to assume the rights of adulthood is 18, because they have the ability to live on their own, and make all decisions for themselves.

When people live on <sup>their</sup> own, there are many things they need to worry about, that they probably never had to before. First they need to get a job to pay for their home, or apartment they need to pay taxes on every thing. Also, if they decide to buy a car, they need to pay for it each month, and they have to save up enough money to pay for insurance. Instead of your parents paying for your food, water, heat and clothing now the individual has to do that for themselves. Moving out of the house for the first time is a lot more expensive than people may think is they add up all the costs they must account for, plus food, water, and maybe some luxuries. All that on a minimum wage job, is tough especially if college is added into the mixture.

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## WRITING



### PERSUASIVE WRITING PROMPT (continued) FINAL COPY

Also when one reaches their adulthood, they have the legal ability to make all their own decision for themselves. If they get their own place, they can decide who they live with. They get to decide with who, and when they can go out. They have the choice as to whether or not they would like to get married, and when. Also if they would like to have kids or not. They could choose to live in a different country, or just spend their whole lives traveling all over the world. It becomes the individual's decision as to whether or not they would like to continue schooling to college or not, if it wasn't already. They get to decide who they want to vote for in elections. Lastly they have to decide on making a good or bad decision, because now that one is an adult the wrong decision could mean jail.

In conclusion, becoming 18, and entering adulthood, is not easy and can be expensive. But, it is one of the most important steps in our lives. When turning 18 we get to take over the control of our life, and either full speed ahead, or we crash and burn.

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## WRITING

### Conventions Score 2

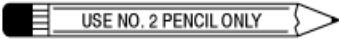
The writer demonstrates limited skill in conventions.

The essay demonstrates limited control of sentence formation. The student frequently attempts complex sentences; some are successful, others are not. The frequent incorrect placement or omission of commas forces the reader to re-read many segments of the essay in order to follow the writer's intent. This issue also results in a sentence fragment on the second page. ("Also, if they would like to have kids or not.")

There are spelling errors in the essay: "meen" for "mean," "wether" for "whether," "colleage" for "college," and "acount" for "account." The student occasionally capitalizes after a comma; in some of these cases the sentence would have been improved if the student had employed a period rather than a comma. There are other grammar errors. "You" is used in place of "your" in the first sentence. The last sentence has a usage problem ("either full speed ahead, or we crash and burn") in which the construction is not parallel. The third paragraph contains parallel pronoun problems that result in a demonstration of inconsistent control ("one reaches their adulthood").

The essay exemplifies limited control of all elements of conventions.

## WRITING



### PERSUASIVE WRITING PROMPT FINAL COPY

BECAUSE ACTIONS every Body can  
see AND Greatt thoughts not everyone  
would think THAT thoughts is what  
PEOPLE CAN imAgivle, Not everyone  
can iMAGine things. But most people  
CAN see things

#### Conventions Score 1

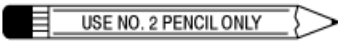
The writer fails to demonstrate adequate control of sentence formation. In the small sample of writing provided, sentence structure and variety are severely limited. There are usage and punctuation errors ["such as" should not be followed by punctuation, "devise" should be "device," and "your" should be "you're" among others.] Although these errors do not interfere with meaning, the writer has not demonstrated an adequate grasp of sentence formation.

This essay exemplifies limited control of all elements of conventions.

If you need additional space, please continue on the next page.



## WRITING



### INFORMATIONAL WRITING PROMPT FINAL COPY

Good design is a blend of form a function. Clothes might You design that would improve People's lives.

The Good design for clothes, materials, that You wear use for wearing purpose and Put on the table, chairs, sofas, Furniture, TV and towels. To use when You going to take bath After You use to wipe the Water for our body, that makes so many design for clothes, Materials that You Make People's changes in their lives.

For Some People affect the clothes that they use Some Products for wearing items that is so much affect for People Who ware silk, cotton, ivory use for coats and Jackets. clothes for the use different Product Mix in clothes. For design for good clothes they do some works on that clothes. Ex: Embroidry Mirrors on the dress which You like that Make that Your choice.

The people affects so many changes in lives that change their desicions to chang their problems. They Plan about carriers and future. And They Make desicision about their-self. They improve their Leves.

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## WRITING

### **Conventions Score 1**

The student knows that sentences start with a capital letter, end with a period, and contain one idea. Unfortunately, the student has not successfully executed correct sentence formation. While the majority of the words are spelled correctly, the word order is wrong. However, this student has correctly demonstrated the use of commas in a series.

The essay exemplifies minimal control of all elements of conventions.

**Writing  
Grade 11  
Item and Scoring Sampler**

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